ABSTRACT

Title: Method of Operating a Service

5 A method of operating a service over a computer network which has a customer and a vendor which negotiate during a contract formation phase of a transaction and in which a product or service is supplied to the customer during a contract execution phase of the transaction, there being a customer interface between the customer and the network to enable messages transmitted on the network

10 according to a network protocol to be utilised by the customer, and to enable messages originating from the customer to be transmitted onto the network according to the network protocol, and a vendor interface between the vendor and the network to enable messages transmitted on the network according to a network protocol to be utilised by the vendor and to enable messages

15 originating from the vendor to be transmitted onto the network according to the network protocol, and wherein the method includes differentiating messages relating to contract formation and contract execution phases of the transaction, messages relating to the contract formation phase of the transaction being enabled for transmission onto the network or for utilisation by the customer or

20 vendor by a first sub-interface of the respective customer or vendor interface, and messages relating to the contract execution phase of the transaction being enabled for transmission onto the network or for utilisation by the customer or vendor by a second sub-interface of the respective customer or vendor interface.